

Resolution in Support of Universal Access to Pre-Kindergarten and Other Appropriate Strategies to Improve Early Literacy in Durham County

WHEREAS, there is recognition of the need to better prepare all of Durham's children to be successful in school; and

WHEREAS, the County, City and School System leaders believe in the power of high quality pre-K to support the goals of the County's *My Brother's Keeper*, the Mayor's *Poverty Reduction Initiative*, Durham Public School's *Graduate Durham*, Duke University Office of Durham and Regional Affairs' *Grown in Durham*, and other initiatives; and

WHEREAS, research indicates that the fastest rate of brain development occurs in the early years and that high quality early childhood programs improve children's cognitive and social skills; and

WHEREAS, universal access to high quality pre-K in Durham will help decrease the achievement gap, decrease generational poverty, and increase graduation rates of students in Durham Public Schools; and

WHEREAS, universal pre-K is a proven, nonpartisan policy and North Carolina should join states such as Oklahoma, Georgia and Florida which fund statewide universal pre-K programs; and

WHEREAS, ensuring access to high quality preschool for children whose parents choose to send them has proven to be one of the soundest educational investments the public can make, providing demonstrated, significant, long-term savings in the community costs of special education, grade retention, welfare, and crime;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the City Council of the City of Durham does hereby support expansion of comprehensive prenatal to Age 8 educational enrichment activities and support services for all children in Durham; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the City Council of the City of Durham supports the creation of a Community Early Education Task Force to lead the community in crafting a plan that begins with expanded access and universal access to high quality pre-K for all of Durham's low and moderate income children; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the work and plan of the Task Force should include:

- a) *Assessment of Durham's current capacity for providing high quality preschool services*
(Identify what we have and what we need)
- b) *Methods other communities have used to create broader preschool participation*
- c) *Financial models for supporting universal preschool*
- d) *Methods of cooperating with private or community-based providers of high quality preschools*

- e) Outreach to Durham parents to provide input and feedback*
- f) Evidence-based practices of high quality preschool*
- g) Capacity for increasing professional development opportunities for preschool teachers*
- h) Recommendations for universal preschool in Durham informed by research*
- i) Short and long term evaluation plans to assess the effects of Durham pre-K programs on kindergarten readiness, performance on third grade end-of-year tests, and other key benchmarks such as high school graduation.*
- j) Timeline for implementation*

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Task Force shall be comprised of approximately 12-15 members identified and appointed by the County Manager, City Manager, and Superintendent of Schools by February 1, 2016. Membership on the Task Force should represent academic institutions, the business community, stakeholder groups, and will reflect the demographic makeup of the Durham community.

BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED that the Task Force will report on its progress to the elected bodies quarterly and will deliver by October 1, 2016 a plan for moving first to expanded access and then on to universal access with a goal of implementing a significant pilot model for expanded access by the beginning of the 2017 academic school year.

This resolution is effective upon adoption.